

# Linden Lodge School

61 Princes Way, London SW19 6JB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this residential special school**

This maintained specialist residential school provides boarding and education for disabled children, including sight-impaired and severely sight-impaired children and young people, multi-disabled visually impaired and those with profound multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have either an education healthcare plan or a statement of special educational need. The age range of day pupils is from 2 through to 19 years. The school provides residential accommodation for a maximum of 36 pupils on two residential units, on separate floors in one building. Residential pupils are either weekly boarders, Monday to Friday, or part time for one, two or three nights per week. The school promotes a 'waking day curriculum' across a 24-hour period.

**Inspection dates:** 7 to 9 November 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 29 November 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The leaders and managers have created a culture of continued improvement at the school.
- Enabling children and young people to achieve excellent outcomes is at the centre of the school's improvement culture.
- Residential staff work in effective collaboration with the education and health professionals to deliver integrated care and a consistency of approach.
- Residential staff work in close partnership with children's and young people's families.
- Children and young people receive individualised support from dedicated, caring and highly skilled staff.
- Safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare are integral to the care that residential staff provide.
- Children and young people are safe and have their needs met.
- Children and young people have very positive experiences.
- Children and young people engage in a wide range of recreational, educational and social activities at the school and in the wider community.
- Children and young people achieve good progress across different aspects of their lives. They develop confidence, social skills and friendships.
- Children and young people who receive the residential service have greater educational attainments than their peers who do not.
- The school has a strong capacity for improvement. Having failed five national minimum standards for residential special schools at the inspection in November 2016, it now meets them all.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Staff do not always pay enough attention to detail when dealing with medicines.
- Risk assessments relating to the use of raised bed-sides for individual children and young people are not recorded.
- The audits of the staff recruitment files do not always accurately present the information that is in the files.
- The records of staff supervision meetings do not always evidence that all staff members receive good-quality supervision.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

### **The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

#### **Recommendations**

- Make sure that the records of the amount of medication that is stored in the medication cabinet are accurate.
- Record a specific risk assessment relating to the use of raised bed-sides.
- Make the internal audits of the information on the staff recruitment files more robust.
- Improve the quality of records of staff supervision.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people have a very positive experience of this school's residential service. They receive individualised care and emotional support from dedicated, caring and highly skilled staff. They are safe and have their needs met. They develop a sense of security and belonging to the school community. They achieve good progress across different aspects of their lives. The young person who was able to communicate verbally with the inspector said that everything about the residential school was good.

Having positive experiences in a safe environment helps children and young people to develop confidence to engage in exploring new things. Receiving good care that is sensitive to their identity helps them to form relationships and bonds with adults other than their parents. Sharing positive experiences with other children and young people helps them to develop their social skills and friendships.

Children and young people engage in a wide range of recreational, educational and social activities at the school and in the wider community. They benefit from being able to use the school's excellent facilities outside of school hours. These include an exceptionally well-equipped sensory centre with a library, a swimming pool and thoughtfully organised interactive gardens.

Children and young people visit various places of interest with residential staff. They go walking, shopping, dancing, rock climbing and horse riding. Engaging in charitable events, such as 'Walk for Life', gives them opportunities to raise money for good causes and develop altruistic feelings. Their contributions are valued and help to promote a positive image of disability.

Residential staff communicate with children and young people who have complex communication difficulties sensitively and effectively. They are in tune with the children's and young people's needs, feelings and wishes. Residential staff place great significance on children's and young people's views. They see children and young people beyond their disabilities and respect children's and young people's choices, no matter how subtly these have been communicated.

Residential staff work closely with the education and health professionals to deliver integrated care and a consistency of approach:

- Health professionals provide advice and bespoke training to the residential staff members on how to manage medical conditions and profound health needs. This includes safe management of medication and use of mobility equipment. In addition to the individual education health and care plans, children and young people have detailed individual healthcare plans and health condition-specific care plans, such as an asthma care plan.

- Shared educational and residential targets that are adapted to the residential environment support children's and young people's learning progress and the development of their life skills successfully. The practice of employing some staff to work across both the education and residential service strengthens the links between the two further.

Delicious and nutritious food supports children's health well. Meals are convivial and inclusive occasions that include children and young people on differing eating plans, including those who require specialist equipment. At the residential pupils' meeting, Muslim children commented on how happy they were with the increased selection of halal food on offer.

Residential staff work in close partnership with children's and young people's families. The headteacher co-wrote a training programme for parents to help them to engage more successfully with the local and health authorities and to become better advocates for their children.

All parents who commented during the inspection were highly satisfied with the residential provision. One mother said that over a period spanning more than a decade this residential special school has provided a good service to her two children and the whole family. A mother of another young person commented on how the residential school had transformed their lives. A parent wrote in the Ofsted survey that the school had gone out of its way to be responsive to and supportive of parental concerns, needs and views.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare are integral to the care that residential staff provide. Good safeguarding practices are embedded in the residential service provision. The school is safe.

Residential staff have good safeguarding awareness and knowledge. They have received training on a wide range of safeguarding topics, for example the risks of female genital mutilation and radicalisation. Residential staff have easy access to clear written policies and practical guidance.

High staffing levels, staff vigilance and good risk management contribute to children and young people being protected proactively and effectively. This includes safeguarding from harm, neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, accidents, bullying, radicalisation and any other risks associated with missing from care or education or having profound disabilities and medical needs. Residential staff make sure that any potential safeguarding concerns are recognised early and shared with the school's safeguarding team without delay. The reporting procedures are clear and effective.

The communication about safeguarding in the school is good. A comprehensive framework of meetings ensures this. The safeguarding team meets frequently and regularly to review any safeguarding concerns. The meetings also provide

opportunities for reflecting on the effectiveness of the safeguarding practices.

The school has a good working relationship with the local authority's designated safeguarding officer and the disability teams of the placing authorities. The school shares any concerning information appropriately with its key safeguarding partners. Leaders, managers and staff cooperate with any enquires and investigations. They ensure that any safeguarding strategies that have been agreed are implemented effectively and are maintained under review. The school's staff disciplinary procedure is in line with good child protection practices and procedures.

The school's safeguarding practices are collaborative. There is a multidisciplinary input into the risk management plans. A school nurse oversees the development of strategies to provide safe care to children and young people with a medical diagnosis, such as those who are oxygen dependent or have epilepsy. The school's safeguarding sub-committee includes medical, educational and social care professionals, as well as parents. However, the written risk management plans for the children and young people who use raised bed-sides at the request of their parents do not contain the related written risk assessment/management plan. There have been no accidents, near misses or concerns about this use.

The residential units have a calm, orderly, pleasant and purposeful atmosphere. The school's behaviour management practices are effective. Children and young people who used to behave in ways that caused concern, such as self-harming or harming others around them, have stopped behaving in those ways. There have been no incidents of residential staff having to physically intervene to protect children and young people or adults. Staff use every opportunity to praise children and young people. This positive approach has been effective in helping children and young people to develop more constructive behaviours.

Children and young people enjoy visits to the school from the police and the fire brigade. While being entertained and having fun, they learn about the role of the emergency services in keeping us all safer. They also learn how they can contribute to their own safety and the safety of others, for example by taking part in fire drills. Regular health and safety checks ensure that the school provides a physically safe environment.

The school's vetting procedures ensure that the staff and other people who have regular contact with children and young people are suitable for this position of trust.

A parent governor said that she trusted that, in extreme situations, the school would always 'make the right call'. Other parents who contributed their views to the inspection also said that they trusted 100% that their children were safe when using the residential service.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The leaders and managers have created a culture of continued improvement at the school. Enabling children and young people to achieve excellent outcomes is at the centre of this culture. Comprehensive monitoring processes ensure that leaders and managers have a clear understanding of children's and young people's progress and outcomes.

The residential provision is very much valued for its significant contribution to the school as a whole. The school's monitoring data clearly demonstrates that the children and young people who use the residential service do better in their learning than those who do not use it. This finding was consistent across all measures of attainment that the school uses.

The residential service is managed well. It fulfils the school's vision and the statement of purpose. The team spirit among residential staff is high. Residential staff reported a smooth transition after the head of care left in September 2017. An experienced deputy head of care has stepped up into the acting position on an interim basis.

The school provides a supportive environment for staff. Staff well-being events and regular team meetings, annual appraisals and reviews of the effectiveness of staff practice provide the right balance of support and challenge to staff to keep on improving their care practice. The new headteacher has confidence and trust in the residential staff. As one staff member poetically put it, 'It was good before, but this feels like a dawn of a new day'.

The national leader for education and the residential sub-committee and its improvement task group have contributed to the robust evaluation of the implementation of the school's comprehensive improvement plan. Leaders and managers demonstrate clearly that the residential service has achieved significant improvement since last year. It now meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

The effectiveness of safeguarding that was judged to require improvement in 2016 is now good. Five national minimum standards that were not met at the inspection that took place a year ago, and that are now met, relate to health, safety, child protection, and staff recruitment and training. The improved practices mean that the school now provides a better-quality residential service to children and young people.

At the educational inspection earlier this year, the school was judged to be good across all the areas inspected, apart from the early years provision which was judged to be outstanding. This also demonstrates the school's strong capacity for improvement.

The leaders and managers agreed with the inspector that some areas require further

attention and improvement. The quality of records of audits of medication, staff recruitment files and staff supervision meetings is variable. The following are examples of the weaknesses found at the inspection, together with evidence showing that it was the records rather than the practice that needed improvement:

- Some supervision records are simply a checklist, with binary answers. The residential staff said unanimously that they received good-quality supervision.
- A signed audit of a staff recruitment file provided confusing and incorrect information. The audit sheet indicated that this staff member started working before the school had received any professional references. The information contained in the file showed that this was not the case: all required checks had been returned prior to the beginning of the employment.
- The inspector discovered a discrepancy between the amount of medication that was recorded as present in the locked cabinet and the visual check. Other records demonstrated clearly that the child had received medication as it was prescribed by their doctor.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC010255

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:**

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 020 8788 0107

**Email address:** principal@lindenlodge.wandsworth.sch.uk

## **Inspector**

Seka Graovac, social care inspector (lead)



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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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